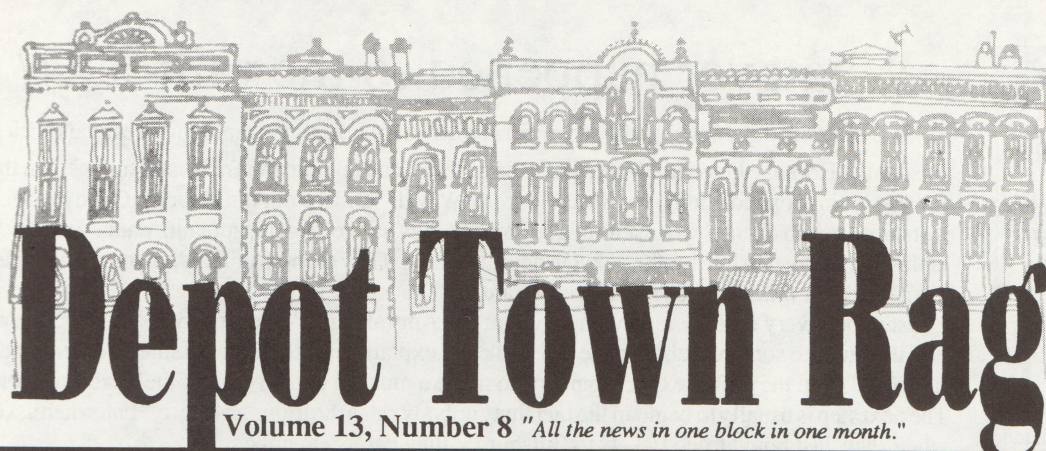




Depot Town Rag

Volume 13, Number 8 "All the news in one block in one month."

100% FREE Rag content
August 1990

Railroad Fax & Fantasies
Heritage Fest info
Jazz Competition
New ZIP in Ypsi
Thanks for everything
... and other strictly local stuff

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Council puts 2 on DDA

Ypsilanti City Council appointed photographer Lynda Hummel and attorney Greg Dodd to the Depot Town Downtown Development Authority at its July 2, 1990 session. They replace retiring DDA members, Bill French and Scott Sobby. Hummel and Dodd are former Ward 5 Councilmembers and Dodd served on the original DDA four years ago.

Some progress has been seen in the past year with the reactivation of the DDA: 1) an ad valorem tax for operation expenses now brings in almost \$4000 annually and 2) the district is one step nearer unification, with State officials paving the way for the addition of several properties which were omitted in the original plan. The next hurdle for the Authority is to convince City Council that such enabling legislation for DDAs also applies in this municipality.

Other members of the Authority include Rex Richie, Judi Monaghan, Corrine Sikorski, Carolyn McKeever, Tom Dodd, and chairman, Paul Fettes. Ypsilanti Mayor, Clyde King, serves as an ex-officio member of the DDA.

Meetings are on the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm in the Freighthouse Coffeeshop and are open to the public. The next session is Thursday, 12 July 1990.

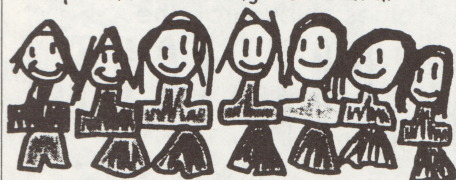
The August 1990 Rag

Bigger and more vital than ever!

12 pages !

Announcing neighborhood events in the.

Ypsilanti Heritage Festival



August 17, 18, & 19, 1990

See pages 5, 6 & 7 for more Festival facts -

Depot People: Jack Miller carries on family tradition



When the Slickers tell about Miller Motor Sales at 100 E. Cross, they describe it as "the last Hudson dealer" in America, but Depot Town's Jack Miller just sees it as the garage he grew up in. In his long service to the Heritage Festival, Jack serves as chair of exhibits for the event.

12th annual Heritage Fest celebrates early successes

"I know what you're doing over there in Ypsilanti," said Jack Gray, one day while we were at work in Ann Arbor. "You're just letting those folks in Ypsi know that it's OK to have fun over there."

And that's been the subliminal theme of Our Town's biggest celebration these last eleven years.

Jack was right. And even more Ann Arborites have admitted as much during the last decade. Ypsi's corny and old fashioned culture makes itself known in the Heritage Festival -- and Modern America seems ready to go back to the old ways once again.

Ypsilanti's annual celebration calls attention to the many spectacular successes of this small city: the Underground Railroad, the well-preserved Victorian architecture, the Willow Run bomber plant, our excellent educational system, one of the best town/gown relationships in any American college town, and a wealth of residential and recreational amenities.

So, don't look for a lot of new stuff at this year's Fest. General Chair for the event, Diane Kerr, has said that this year's main theme will repeat the best of the Festival's decade of successes: the Heritage Parade, the Jazz Competition, the Arts & Crafts, antique cars

in the streets, the Living History Encampment and more.

Riverside Park, Frog Island and Depot Town will fill with folks who love to revel in Our Town's glorious history and a few committee chairs will conspire with City officials to give an Official Estimate of the attendance. No one is quite sure what the formula is, but it has something to do with the first guesstimate multiplied by the Cost of Living Index. Newspapers love to print the result, but always attribute the sum to someone else.

Depot Town has been the best recipient of all this recent reflection upon our history, simply because no one ever made enough money in the old railroad district to 'remuddle' and make everything look modern. It was a good place to start looking at 'the old stuff.'

Other districts have taken notice and have been busy pulling down all that 50s and 60s gridwork from their 19th Century facades and every building season seems like Christmas morning with new presents being opened.

As we continue to celebrate our history, we seem to get older faster, but enjoy it more. In fact, everyone else seems to enjoy our great antiquity, too. Why not? It's Heritage Festival time down in Depot Town!



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Steam to Fort Wayne, July 14, 15

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Greenville - Belding

Trains for Danes, August 17, 18

- Tour Marshall's historic homes.

Detroit - Dearborn - Ann Arbor - Marshall
Marshall Special, September 8, 9

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Detroit - Dearborn - Ann Arbor - Kalamazoo

Harvest Festival Limited, September 8, 9

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Edison Express, October 6, 7

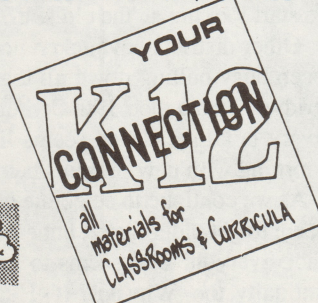
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Page 2 DTA, August 1990

Whatever happened to the railroads?

Some of us only get down to the old railroad district for nostalgic community festivals such as Ypsilanti's Heritage Festival. When that's the case, we can fall into the erroneous supposition that the last train stopped running with the end of WWII. Diners at Ann Arbor's Gandy Dancer restaurant get so excited when a train goes by that they salute, giggle, applaud, dance around the tables and then get in line for the next Disney attraction. They seem to think it's all on a giant video display screen mounted outside the restaurant.

Just about every other person who waves at the Amtrak and Conrail passings in Depot Town will then turn to someone else on the sidewalk and explain that "their grandfather worked for the railroad." And they often expect someone to make a musical comedy out of their exciting story. The next step is usually to bemoan the fact that "nobody rides the trains anymore," but, when asked when *they* last bought two tickets to Pittsburgh, they can't remember.

Yes, the trains still roll through Ypsilanti's railroad district on their route between Detroit and Chicago on what was originally the Michigan Central Railroad - then the New York Central Line, for a short period the Pennsylvania Central Line, and now part of the governmental combine of Amtrak (passenger) and Conrail (freight).

When a special train rolled down the west-bound tracks one evening last June, many observers thought it must be a dream: It all began with the familiar blue and white Conrail engine, but it was followed by thirty-nine (count 'em: thirty-nine) cars of the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus! Two kids who were throwing rocks at the depot at the time just about wet their pants over the phenomenon and older witnesses simply stood agog at the consist of silver coaches, flat bed cars, tankers and generator cars carrying the performers, animals and equipment to their next destination.

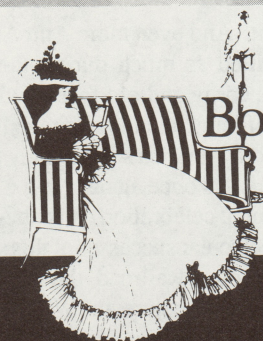
Amtrak's most recent innovation has been the new service which seems to run frontward going west and backward when returning to Detroit. Some have conjectured that it's because they want to make a quick get-away when leaving the Motor City, but closer inspection will show the new two-way design where the coaches and diner can be run from either end — with the diesel power remaining at the west end and not having to be run through the round house at each end several times a day.

Passenger trains make many trips between the two major cities each day with interim stops at Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, Ann Arbor, and Dearborn. The crews change in mid-route, but the equipment keeps on going until it is sold to some 'developing nation' or turned into beer cans.

And they all come right through Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town and we're out there waving with every passage.

But is it 'corny' to wave at the trains? No more corny than it is to gawk at tall buildings in the Big City or marvel at the stars when we're in the wilderness. That's why the nineteenth century architects and builders put all that rich design in the cornices at the tops of their buildings. They *wanted* us to look up there and smile. So, too, do the engine crews expect us to recognize their passing. Notice how genuine is their own enthusiasm in the return wave.

Go ahead. Wave a hankie!

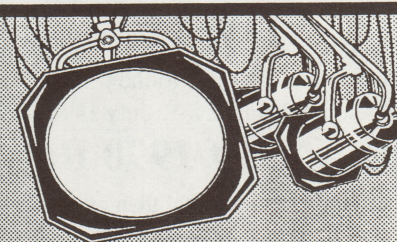


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The Michigan Central Depot at Ypsilanti: Kind of a progress report:

Newest plan to save depot fizzles

In its fourteen years of publication, *The Rag* has found the Most Often Asked Question in the district is: What's happening with the old Michigan Central Depot? And (five different times) *The Rag* has published glowing and hopeful reports of someone's plan to turn it into a restaurant (See: Down By The Old Chocolate Chip Cookie Factory Mill Stream). This piece does not purport to do that. In fact, if anything, perhaps a good old fashioned People's Grass Roots Demonstration is in order around that morbid structure. Or maybe a Tiger Stadium-style Hug by its many fans and loyalists. At any rate, some of our neighbors are more than a little embarrassed about the sign they hung out there two years ago saying, "Coming Soon: Maple Street Station." That plan never materialized either — and the neighborhood is left with egg on its sign.

The 1985 Heritage Festival poster featured an old photo of the depot in its more elegant days and locals prided themselves on the original design of that soaring Victorian structure. But then they compared what's left after train wrecks and fires and neglect and wondered what the County Health Department would require to sanitize that sad pile of bricks into a food-serving establishment.

Over the past decade, several of the architects' plans for what's left of the depot included glassed-in additions and breezeways, adjoining wings for additional dining or kitchen space, attached dining cars and coaches, and even an inflated dome over that quarter of the district. We think they were kidding that time, but maybe they were *all* kidding.

Some of those planners and developers are on their way back from the southwest now, and locals sincerely hope they've made a lot of money in their out-of-Michigan speculations and will return to Ypsilanti's historic district and resurrect the namesake of its old commercial neighborhood.

Landmark lists a landmark

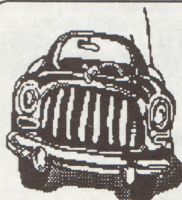
- We've just listed one of Ypsilanti's premiere historic property for sale: 46-50 East Cross. Built in 1854, this 5-apartment, 3-commercial storefront building has a projected yearly income of over \$50,000. Present owner occupies third floor apartment of 3000 sq. ft. Fully rented, all units have separate utilities and meet all current city codes. Some special features of the Masonic Block include new roof and furnaces, paved parking with patio/garden area, covered open back porches and your own private 50 ft. ballroom. Call us for for an appointment. \$350,000.
- Greek Revival at 232 North River, this recently painted historic home is excellent for owner occupied w/ income from two spacious, charming apartments. All three units have private porches, off-street parking. Meets city codes. \$59,000. Land contract terms available.

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"No Parking" signs banned!

No sooner did the international sign for "get off my property" become common knowledge in America, than everyone wanted at least three of them to nail up in front of their business. And then they wondered why no one came in to shop.

Depot Town did it differently - about twelve years ago. It ripped out the parking meters and encouraged the shop owners and employees to park out in back. Customers found it much closer than anything they found in the asphalt acres of the malls! They liked it. They parked there. They shopped.

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Town Rag**
are only
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Leave copy in
The Old Caboose

Page 3 DTA,
August 1990

Food Co-op EXPANDS

You'll see an expanded sales room on your next visit to the Ypsilanti Food Co-op at 312 North River. More than 600 square feet of food display space was made available this summer by opening the original bricked arch which leads into the former machine works building (now called The Millworks).

The expansion from its previous configuration now abuts the north wall of the newly opened Depot Town Sourdough Bakery. Most wise food shoppers agree, it's a handy and convenient location.

Co-op spokesperson, Corrine Sikorski, says, "It been a long-awaited plan," and the expansion seems to double the food storage and sales space from the previous arrangement.

Open to participating members and the general public, the Co-op provides fresh produce every day and offers a fresh supply of organic chicken, eggs and beef. The Co-op is open seven days a week and continues to be one of the best food investments around.

THANKS

to all the many

Depot Town businesses who:

- post their hours and open and close on time
- greet every customer with a friendly "hello"
- keep their sidewalks clean and tidy all year 'round
- keep their stock and services *first rate*
- change their creative window displays with regularity
- include "in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town" with all their printing
- grease the wheel by shopping in their own district, too
- support their 'house organ,' the monthly *Depot Town Rag*
- help with the district's floral displays
- sweep off their front entry daily
- park a block away so the customers can get the good spots
- support district promotions with happy enthusiasm
- are knowledgeable about neighborhood issues
- mix old fashioned traditions with modern techniques
- carry on the tradition of 19th Century shopkeeping and friendliness
- have good neighbors because they are good neighbors

Page 4 DTA, August 1990

Like a speeding bullet! - by Wanda Spieser

The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain, but in Depot Town the rain falls on a train ... or a couple of them ... when it's raining, that is. They come "whooshing" out of Detroit and race for Chicago on really-squeally wheels, sounding a forlorn whistle sound as they rush by. And then they do it all over again in reverse, rushing from Chicago to Detroit. Somehow, this is an ear and eyeball fascination for the folks who converge on Depot Town en masse every Saturday, rain or shine.

On July 7 I was one of the folks, and on the porch of the Freighthouse two little-girl-type people were sitting inside the miniature train. They informed me that "This is a fruit train — because it hauls *fruit* ." Made sense to Peter Pan — me!

And there was the Mother Hen, a lady named Marian Colon, who informed me that the most fun we can ever have its to take a train ride. She said, "We like 'em wobbly and we like 'em smooth, but we sure like to ride on them!" Then she wheeled like a Mother Hen and steered her chicks on their merry way.

Just inside the Freighthouse there was a new happening as of this Saturday, the seventh. A cozy corner has been named "1st Class Fare," which is just as clever as the originators are clever: Carl Edwards and Judy Ryan are both special education teachers and are chock-full of good ideas for their little "magic place." They will serve excellent gourmet coffee (at a deep discount) and some wonderful Michigan jam on little crackers for your taste-bud pleasure every Saturday. They sell fresh cut flowers which nod sleepily around the spot. Carl and Judy are planning to make curtains for the windows of the Freighthouse to make it even more appealing for the socializing crowd. Welcome, good people Carl and Judy!!

The young couple exclaimed that "trains have a certain romance that will never be replaced by diesels." Bravo for them! Our feeling, exactly, as we watch and listen. Even my grandson, Nathan, sees the "special something" about a train. After I gave his Dad a Glenn Miller tape, he greets me with, "Grandma! Chattanooga Choo-Choo!" (Who needs to tell Nathan about trains?)

Just inside the doors of the Freighthouse there is a pretty blonde named Irene who dispenses hot dogs, bagels with cream cheese, blueberry muffins and cinnamon buns that she makes with her own pinkies, and (Lord, have mercy!) *kielbasa*. Immediately the Pole in me renamed the place the "Hamtramck Freighthouse!" Irene understands Polish humor and she also dispenses common sense.

Another lady, named Virginia Young, a steady entrepreneur of Depot Town, told of her father who was an old-time boiler fireman on a train somewhere in Nebraska. Virginia said that when her father died, the train in his town stopped running to pay tribute to the Train Man, and let his funeral cortege pass by slowly. There is something special about trains, I think. It seems to bring out the best in people. (Does a train have a soul?)

And after the day was done and all was said I had a new jewel for my "happy" crown. It gleams like the old-time lantern on the cow-catcher front of an old-type train. I feel so good that I will return next Saturday.

to DTA's outgoing officers:

- **Paul Feters**, president, past vice-president, DDA chair, long-time local activist, continuous volunteer, and owner/manager of River Artworks these past eleven years.
- **Jacob Guter**, vice-president, past president, volunteer bartender, perceptual handicapper, architect and active supporter of the area — now moving to Ferndale.
- **Mary Doll**, secretary for many years, another architect, regular helper, creative innovator, and married to Jacob (above) and still scraping paint in Ferndale with him.
- **Judi Monaghan**, long-time treasurer — but the famous name didn't help at all; she could only count *our* money. Judi will guide the new treasurer in keeping the several line items straight.

Make it a contest. Will Rogers (or somebody) said that, "when there's only one person running for the office, we should vote YES or NO." What would happen if they held an election and nobody came?



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Ypsilanti Heritage Festival 1990 events in Depot Town

City Body is Festival Kick-off site

One of the most elegant affairs of the season is the Heritage Festival Kick-off Party, Thursday, August 16, to be held this year in the new garage at City Body, 20 East Cross,. Tickets for the champagne event are \$20 per person, via the Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce.

Jack Miller puts Ypsi's Festival on wheels

Depot Town's Hudson dealer is bringing lots of neat stuff to the block again this year. Using his venerable old car showroom for his headquarters, Jack's been able to amass the following shows for this month's big event:

- **Early Engine Expo** by the Depot Town Antique Engine Club in the Plaza (Friday, Saturday and Sunday)
- **Farm Tractor Exhibit** in the Plaza
- **Farm Toy Show & Sale**, under the direction of Mark Phillips in the Plaza Saturday and Sunday
- **Antique Bottle Show**, organized by Ernie Griffin (in the Plaza this year)
- **Model Trains** assembled and run by Larry Proctor, Friday, Saturday and Sunday in the Freighthouse
- **Antique Autos** - Featuring the Cadillac/LaSalle Club, Motor City Chapter, Sunday only, on East Cross Street and other exhibits on Frog Island all three days.
- Ike Rednour and family (Ike's Barbershop) will again sponsor the **Horseshoe Pitching Tournament** on Frog Island.
- Last year's popular **Pedal Pull** for children will be staged at 2 pm Saturday, on Cross Street near the railroad tracks.
- **The Heritage Jazz Competition** returns after a year's absence. See pages 6 & 7.

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1990 Festival poster by seven-year-old artist

Carrie Van Bemmelen brings home her drawings and paintings from Estabrook/New Horizons School and mom hangs them on the refrigerator with magnets, but her entry in the Heritage Festival poster event got her art plastered all over the state of Michigan.

When Festival chair, Diane Kerr, started the concept of a composite of children's art for this year's poster, more than 250 submissions arrived from students in the Ypsilanti, Lincoln and Willow Run school districts. "We saw more than a few Ninja Turtle themes, but Carrie's design was perfect beyond our expectations," enthuses Kerr.

Breaking from the eleven-year custom of farming the Festival poster design out to local advertising professionals, this year's elegant poster is the result of an area-wide contest among school children.

Carrie's design concept shows seven primary-colored kids watching the Rubber Ducky Race in the Huron River. Committee members simply added the Festival date and printed up a special edition of red, yellow and blue placards touting Ypsilanti's greatest and most popular event.

Carrie VanBemmelen unveiled her original work and autographed posters at a press conference on July 10 held at Depot Town's City Body, the site of this year's Heritage Festival kick-off party.

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Angle parking to return with street auto shows

It should look just like the good old days for the first two days of Heritage Festival, when Connie Bank Webster brings several fleets of antique and customized automobiles into the district for display. Ypsilanti Fire inspectors have measured the available space and pronounced it to be wider than the previous fire lane necessary for Festival crowds and possible emergency access. Now some would like to make angle parking a daily occurrence in the district.

A brand new member of Jack Miller's exhibits committee, Connie has contacted the Packard Club, the Antique Automobile Club of America, the Dexter Car Club, Ypsilanti Street Rods and the Midnight Cruisers of Belleville. She expects at least 50 historic cars each of the first two days of the event.

"The Friday and Saturday exhibits will complement the many historic vehicles featured in the Heritage Parade, the Frog Island show and the general ambiance of the historic district," says Bank. Connie has been a regular worker at Jazz events in the district and has proven an eager organizer for the 1990 Heritage Fest.

Brass Bed Raffle benefits district projects

A 1915-era full-size double brass bed is the 'first prize' in the Depot Town raffle beginning the end of July and running until the last day of Heritage Festival. A variety of 'other swell prizes' also will be drawn and given away at the Jazz tent's final performance, says Depot Exchange's Steve Gross, chair for the raffle/event.

One of the six Festival-approved raffles, Gross plans for the proceeds of the drawing to go toward local promotion which should help keep the Heritage Festival spirit alive throughout the year in Ypsilanti's historic Depot-Town.

The recently buffed and polished brass bed is on exhibit in the window of Depot Exchange, 54 East Cross Street, and tickets are available up and down the streets of Depot Town.

Steve's other recent efforts for the good of the block included a variety of raffles which have called attention to the quality of life in the old railroad district.

Do it in Depot Town!



Friday night: Regular Boys

Here's one musical group that really lives up to its name. The Regular Boys started out their nine-piece R&B group at Aubree's Second Floor in 1987 and went on to become one of the hottest, foot-stompinest bands in the mid-west.

Since their Depot Town debut, they've appeared at Detroit's Soup Kitchen and performed with such notables as Roy Orbison, Bo Diddley and Roomful of Blues. They're well known in the music world today, and look forward to this return to their 'roots.'

"They have a really superior horn section," says Aubree's owner, Bill French, "and they were among the many favorites of our clientele." Aubree's fans included a wide range of ages -- spanning several generations -- and The Regular Boys' rhythm and blues style is one of the most popular acts ever to appear in the block. They'll be the highlight of the return of JAZZ to this year's Heritage Festival.



Saturday night: Robert Penn's Blues Revue

"His voice bellows and coos, his guitar stings and soothes," *The Detroit News*.

Robert Penn is an old friend to Depot Town. In his appearance at the April Blues Fest in the Freighthouse, he was the hit of the evening. He's been with us before, both in the Winter Series and in popular appearances at Aubree's Second Floor. Many fans remember his early appearances with Marcus Belgrave in the old basement club at Ann Arbor's Blind Pig and at the Apartment Lounge.

A former second guitarist for B.B. King, Penn acknowledges his mentorship: "He's my greatest influence. I had a chance to play with him and, I tell you, it still gives me all the inspiration in the world. He is a great guy; I learned so much from him."

In his piece in *The Detroit News*, Jim Dulzo tells of Penn's experiences growing up in Inkster — *At a family gathering one night when Penn was 7, his two uncles were the life of the party, playing guitar and harmonica and singing.*

"My one uncle got a little too tipsy and forgot his guitar when he went home that night." Penn remembers. "When I called him up the next morning and said, 'Uncle Bill, you left your guitar here,' he said, 'Aw, boy, just keep it.'"

Keep it he did. Applying some hard work to this lucky donation, he started learning all about how to play the blues. His dad kept the inspiration coming, taking him to the Motown revues in downtown Detroit.

Penn also accredits "The Motown Sound" as another great influence on his style and career as a bluesman.

Robert Penn was voted best blues vocalist in *Metro Times* in 1988. More recently, he has been a featured artist of Blues Factory Records, who handled the artists in April's Blues Fest in Depot Town.



Sunday afternoon: The Henry Ford Community College Jazz Ensemble

This excellent group makes its first appearance in Depot Town and creates a perfect setting to celebrate the return of the weekend's winner musicians.

The College Jazz Ensemble was established seven years ago. Since that time the group has had phenomenal success and has appeared with much acclaim at home and abroad. During each of these seven years, the group has appeared at the Aquinas Intercollegiate Jazz Festival and the Montreux/Detroit Jazz Festival.

The Ensemble has received numerous solo and section awards at U.S. jazz festivals and competitions. Festivals included the New Orleans Mardi Gras, Montreux Switzerland Jazz Fest (twice), and in competition they won the title "Best College Band" at the 1984 Governor's State University Competition in Chicago.

The group was one of 12 college bands selected to compete in the finals of the 1987 MusicFest U.S.A. Following their outstanding performance there, they were invited to perform in the Caribbean on the cruise ship S.S. Emerald Seas. During the past seven years, 30 members have received outstanding soloist awards.

In addition to concert tours, the Ensemble continues with its busy schedule of performances in and around the Detroit area, with appearances at summer concerts-in-the-park and performances at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Their most memorable concert was at New York's Carnegie Hall.

The Jazz Ensemble is under the direction of Rick L. Goward, who also conducts the Metropolitan Symphony Band, Brass Choir and the Studio 110 Big Band.

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The 1990 Heritage Jazz Competition

presented by radio WEMU and the Depot Town Association

Heritage Jazz is back . . . and it's still FREE!

After a year's absence and much mourning on the part of the district's regular jazz addicts, Depot Town and WEMU are happy to return some of the best local and regional talent to the block for this year's August Heritage Jazz Competition.

Last year's concerts in Riverside Park were a noble experiment, noted many of the loyal followers, and it was great to see big name artists in Ypsilanti, but it just wasn't the same as showcasing local jazz talent under a big, cool tent

next to the tracks down in historic Depot Town.

The tradition picks up where it left off -- with free admission, great competition, spectacular professional presentations each day, umbrella tables in the shade, lights in the trees at night and just about all the ambience a small neighborhood can offer.



Some background of the Jazz Competition

In a town where tradition can be invented overnight, jazz seemed to fit these old, Italianate commercial buildings just as perfectly as in New Orleans. That arrogant parallel encouraged the district's drum beaters to put together what became the first **Winter Jazz Series** in the yet-unheated Freighthouse. Sub-zero weather for two of the first six concerts only served to draw the fans and the promoters closer together. That was twelve years ago.

That success was followed by the initiation of the **Frog Island Festival** which has grown to a three-day event in June of every year in the district's 'back yard.'

The first **Competition** was held around a sidewalk beer tent in the rain, but loyalists said it was a bell wether for promotions to come. True to the decade-long tradition of Ypsilanti's Heritage Festival, it became another great event which required no expense on the part of the public. Admission continues to be free. It's a great place to sit and rest . . . and listen!

The small profits from the Association's beer tent pay for the prizes, judges and other expenses for the event.

Benefits of competition

Award categories include: solo, duo, trio, combo and vocalist. Winners receive up to two hundred and fifty dollars worth of services and/or merchandise from area music stores and engagement at choice area venues.

Prizes this year will include generous donations of services or instruments from area music stores and engagements at choice area venues as the Soup Kitchen in Detroit. All competition participants will be given a five dollar stipend to defray the cost of gasoline, preparation, etc.

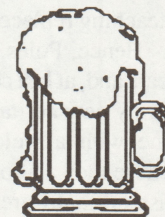
Entering this competition carries with it many benefits: exposure to a wide, perceptive radio audience over WEMU (89.1-FM), exposure to listeners in the jazz tent, (many of whom come to the Heritage Festival for this event only), a top-notch recording of your group in performance and the knowledge that your ensemble participated in one of Southeastern Michigan's most prestigious music competitions. Past winners of the competition who now have become household names in jazz circles include: Suzanne Lane, Harvey Thompson and the Motor City Jazz Quintet. These groups will also receive considerable exposure in print.

Jazz is back in Depot Town!

WEMU and the Depot Town Association are proud to once again present the annual Heritage Jazz Competition as part of the 1990 Ypsilanti Heritage Festival. This competition gives aspiring jazz musicians exposure to an appreciative audience both in the Jazz Tent and over the airwaves of WEMU, Ypsilanti (89.1-FM). The free show is capped off each day of the competition with headlining acts.

Applications were taken until mid-July for ensembles of any size -- from solo to big band. Entrants were chosen from audition cassettes with at least three selections of their music, a brief description of their group and return address information.

WEMU's talent coordinator/producer, Linda Yon, worked with Depot Town's Bill and Sandee French of Aubree's Saloon, Linda French of the Sidetrack, and Steve Gross of Depot Exchange -- and their various committees -- to pull this musical event together again this year.



DTA
Beer
Tent

a place to sit and listen.

And you can sit and listen FREE
-even if you *don't* want a beer!



COLLECTORS' ITEMS

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(We have to pay for the liability insurance, don't we?)

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This Coupon.

Page 7 DTA, August 1990

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[Beginning with our July issue, we featured a new writer, Wanda Spieser, who will submit regular 'color articles' about the life and times in Depot Town. She wrote about the Frog Island Festival and the opening of the Depot Town Sourdough Bakery on North River Street. Herewith, Wanda introduces herself as a new-old member of the Depot Town community.]

I would like to give the readers five more "W's" . . . Who, What, Where, When and Why . . . the journalist's traditional opening to any story. This is the personal story of Wanda Rak Spieser, known in some places as the Polish Panther. That's the "Who" part. "What" is the part that says I wear a coat of many colors. My class in grammar school in Hamtramck (where I was born in 1924) was comprised of twenty-three different nationalities, and the only difference we noticed among us was "Who will win the spelling bee?" My background is a mixture of Polish and Czech, as my great-grandfather was imported from Czechoslovakia by a Count Potocki to serve as his brewmaster (when Poland was owned by counts and dukes, and the land was worked by peasants). The maternal side of my family is 100% Polish. Schooling was hard to come by on busy farms in Poland, so the Catholic Church's teaching replaced the school's — of necessity. Hence, Poles have been Christian for 1000 years and, at last count, were still praying. Part of my new heritage in America has provided me with a welcome niche in every church because they all contain the same "brothers and sisters" that I grew up with, and the same God.

"Where?" is next on the list. From the sausage and bread smells and the native talk in the streets of Hamtramck, my family moved to the East side of Detroit and then made many more moves because we were too poor to own a house. Nobody told us that we were poor, so we basked in the sunshine of freedom and good schools. In that respect we were rich. "Where" took me to the High School of Commerce in downtown Detroit where I learned typing, shorthand, the academic subjects and journal

Wanda's wonderful world of words . . . explores the 5 W's of Journalism

ism, in preparation for the dream of a lifetime.

"When" I graduated, I worked for Canadian Customs on the Detroit River (speaking of trains and whistles!), various insurance agencies, and as an executive secretary for a large advertising firm. "When" I was 19, I attended Wayne State University on a hard-earned scholarship, and relentlessly pursued my dream of being a writer some day. But I did not learn the English language until I was seven, and now my children say that I have graduated to "word-mania." After college, I met and married a handsome soldier who had a boxing team in the army . . . and read poetry to me, and brought me rosebuds in little vases.

Wally and I soon started on our "Whats." First there was Sharman, a graduate of MSU, wife to Tom Lutz (who does a mean funky chicken), and mother to Nathan. She was with Affirmative Action and is now affiliated with Tappan School in Ann Arbor. She has also done a stint as a teacher and, to her credit, won a writing award from *The Detroit News* for a short-short story which she wrote during her high school years.

Our second "What" was Charlie, now residing in Dillsburg, Pa., and is a jack-of-all-trades, most recently a dog trainer and handler.

Dark-eyed and handsome David was number three, who works long hours at the two People's Cooperatives in Ann Arbor, sometimes driving a truck to Amish country to pick up organically-grown produce, which is then sold to the health-minded in Ann Arbor.

The last, but not the least, "What" is John — who almost didn't make it as a four-pound preemie, but can now do almost any kind of work, climbs trees as fast as a monkey, strives to help save dying forests, is learning to mill flour, has baked bread at the Wildflour Bakery in Ann Arbor, and will soon depart for Emmet County in upper Michigan to do his own organic farming, using all of his know-how and talents learned from his young life to learn how to *survive* in a possibly barren planet — which we all may inherit in the imminent future. John lives with the lovely Teresa, and possibly the happiest and healthiest child seen anywhere . . my grand-daughter, Marly the *Queen*, as I have dubbed her. She has strawberry-hued curls, skin like pink alabaster, great blue eyes, teeth like pearls, and a body that has known only a case of sniffles a couple of times during her three years. She is an example to parents who worry about proper nutrition for their children, and will pass the torch of good health to succeeding generations . . . who may have to survive tribulations that we cannot imagine in our own time. So — do you want more "Whats"? My productions have covered all of them, and the headline here is "LOVE"!!!

Now for the "Why" of it all: My beautiful grandson, Nathan, three, loudly exclaims, "Grandma . . . CHRISTMAS!" as the lights of Ypsi twinkle below and I enjoy my retirement to the fullest. My tribe of children and grandchildren remind me often to take it easy and "chill out," which I do in my comfortable surroundings. So, with apologies to Dr. Martin Luther King, I must say that "I have a scheme:"

My old identity
Was easy as 1-2-3.
Used to run and run
And talk my way into heaven.
The New Me
Is gonna' be free;
Gonna' write and write
So that I can BE!

[Watch for further features from Wanda in upcoming issues of *The Rag*. -ed]

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Renewed ZIP ? Some snappy new slogans might help

[June commercials on Detroit's WJR radio station touted "the Frog Island Festival in Ann Arbor." We looked for it, but came back to Depot Town and there it was.]

Recent letters to the editor of Our Town's daily newz have expressed alarm over the posh, year-old Radisson Hotel's promotions which suggest it might be in Ann Arbor — or maybe Dearborn, or Mackinac Island, or someplace else — but never in Ypsilanti. Local wags know full well that that homely edifice (albeit much prettier on the inside) is just south of the City of YPSILANTI and firmly ensconced in YPSILANTI Township on the shores of beautiful Ford Lake. (Local politicoes have taken to referring to both the City and the Township as just plain YPSILANTI, pretending that it doesn't make any difference at all — until you examine your tax bill.)

Radisson's confusing public image fits an old tradition — which is often dredged up for historians at Heritage Festival time: the 1850's secession of YPSILANTI's east side from the rest of the city. That's not the point this time. [Actually, when the United States Post Office declared that America's largest ZIP Code (48197) was too large for them to handle, they automatically made the same division of the community — the line ran right down the middle of the Huron River, declaring east-siders to be in the new 48198 ZIP and west-siders remained in the popular, old 48197 ZIP.] But, as we said, that's not what this is about.

Messing around with the governmental boundaries or our perceptions of them is nothing new. When the development of the Glencoe Hills apartment complex came about several years ago, strings were pulled to place an Ann Arbor address on the east side of US-23. 48108 may confuse people who feel they're really in Ypsilanti, but that's the way they saw it at the time.

Washtenaw Community College, soon after, developed its land just north of there and received a 48106 designation for that former wood lot. And, when the rest of the Julien farm orchards were plowed under to make way for the giant Catherine McCauley Health Center, they were given the -06 numeric monicker, too. Folks who thought those places were in Ypsi found this quite confusing.

Now, one might say that Ann Arbor reaches all the way to Golfside Road, and east from K-Mart (K-Mart's, if you're really an aficionado) is where True Ypsilanti begins. The school systems seem to agree, and the townships aren't far behind.

Enough background.

Still in
Ypsilanti
... and happy
to be here ...

Just where is
TRUE YPSILANTI,
anyway?

If institutions such as Posh Radisson are really avoiding the name, can total abdication be far behind? We know of several subdividers in Hickory Hills just south of the freeway (no hickories, no hills!) who would gladly shed their ZIPs to be more closely aligned with the July Art Fair crowd. And realtors continually refer to addresses in Ypsilanti's "prominent west side" as "almost in Ann Arbor."

A quick look at a map of the area shows the tiny City of YPSILANTI straddling the east-west line at the juncture of Ypsilanti Township and Superior Township. But those who 'split' and refuse to recognize their true heritage of The Land do not leave little pockets of Ann Arbor in their emptiness. Only Ann Arbor Township can do that with its zillion tiny triangles of low-tax enclaves surrounded by the giant office complex of the Athens of the Midwest.

Only the Willow Run contingent seems to revel in its questionable hometown-ness. Even without a central business district, a downtown, or a city hall, folks from The Run seem fiercely proud of their community. Maybe it's their excellent school system. It's certainly not Willow Run's Main Street — a desolate paved strip running north off Grove Road and ending at I-94. And their address is YPSILANTI, too.

Depot Towners have long enjoyed their position at the crux of such controversy, and many fellow Ypsilantians have joined that happy position in geography. The Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce keeps its real name and its real program for real people. The Central Business Community sees itself as *Central*, as well, and that's downtown YPSILANTI! We like their style. And these three will hold the fabric together while those with severe identity crises try to find themselves.

Maybe all we need
is a good slogan:

Someone has said that, if the Savings and Loan scandal had been simpler to understand, Americans would have created a catchy slogan and thrown all the buggers out of office. Maybe that's what YPSILANTI needs.

As the Ypsilanti Area Visitors and Convention Bureau says in its regular promotion of the area, "Try Ypsilanti — a town as unique as its name." And another popular area slogan has been "Discover Depot Town!" The City of Ypsilanti prints "The City That Works," either being incredibly cryptic regarding its mechanizations or blatantly plagiarizing Richard Daley's Chicago slogan of a generation ago. Ypsilanti Township continues to remind us that it's the "Charter Township of Ypsilanti," just like some City residents declare to have been handed their land in the French Claim from one of the Louies. Sorry; no slogan, no respect.

Herewith, *The Rag* has polled regular readers to offer up more snappy slogans to help others find themselves in our lovely little community:

Ypsilanti — where some of the people's more exotic and unusual first names are due, primarily, to faulty penmanship or sloppy handwriting.

Ypsilanti — almost as much fun as being there.

Ypsilanti — we haven't torn down the good stuff yet.

Ypsilanti — where East meets West: usually over coffee.

Ypsilanti — keeping Wayne out of Ann Arbor.

Ypsilanti — as small as you can get and still be a city.

Ypsilanti — it's Greek to me!

We like: **Ypsilanti** — we like it!

Even more local slogans
we haven't been ashamed
to use in the past decade:

- Antiques, food & fun in the old railroad district
- Depot Town is what America was !
- The "good old days" are still here - down in Depot Town!
- To Depot Town from the Radisson, by cab or canoe!
- The 19th Century is just around the corner!
- You can even eat with your hat on!
- 40 exciting shops (and a few dull ones)
- ... and lots more jingoism with many exclamation points! Where else can this kind of corny sloganeering flourish? Television? Well ...

Page 9 DTA, August 1990

August 1990

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Development Authority (DDA)

7:30 p.m. Thursday, 8/9

Freighthouse Coffeeshop

Association

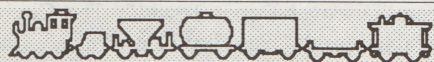
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 8/16

The Old Caboose

Antique Engine Club

7:00 p.m. Thursday, 8/23

Freighthouse Coffeeshop



The Depot Town Rag

Depot Town: Ypsilanti's railroad district
Rag: a paper written by non-professionals
Editor: Tom Dodd

Feature writer: Wanda Spieser

Proof reader: Vivian Rowland

Published monthly at Hansen's Standard Printing Company, 35 East Cross Street, Ypsilanti

Subscriptions: via DTA associate (non-voting) membership (\$10 annually)

Mailing: John & Sonja Waite

Distribution: 2500 copies throughout the district via Depot Town businesses

Advertising: \$10 a month for local businesses. Others by special arrangement

Editorial policy: Letters, opinions, short articles and other contributions which fit the purposes* of the Association may be submitted for consideration.

The house organ of the Depot Town Association, Inc.

c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place

Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

*... a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.



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The Depot Town Association, Inc. July 19

Vice president **Jacob Guter** chaired the meeting while president Feters was on vacation.

The June minutes were approved as published.

Treasurer's report accepted as presented and Rex Richie will do some "serious reporting" on the Rag's accounts at the August meeting. Building owners are considering

Rag business sponsorships to be included in lease agreements. Decisions will be made in time for the October issue.

The Small Business Center has been hosting sessions to examine local associations' affiliation with the Chamber of Commerce. Feters and McKeever have attended. CBC, the Women's Division, Mainstreet and others are involved in discussion. Kent Brown will be invited to the September DTA annual meeting.

Budget & Events: No final figures from Dave Siglin on the June Frog Island Festival yet. Gary McKeever will be the DTA liaison to The Ark to determine future plans.

Heritage Festival:

- Steve Gross reported on the antique car show and welcomed Connie Bank to the ever-growing force of active volunteers.

- Cornice lights will be on for Festival week-end beginning Thursday, 16 August, for the Kick Off Party to be held at City Body. Lighting hours will be 9pm to 1 am Thursday, Friday and Saturday of Heritage weekend. Paul Feters was appointed to check on new bulbs, light maintenance, etc.

- Expenses for the Brass Bed Raffle will be \$350. with the drawing to be held in the Jazz Tent at midnight Saturday, August 18.

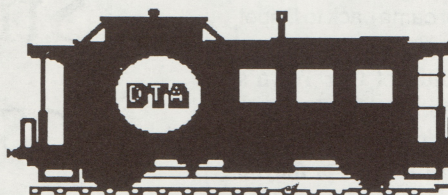
- Bill French reported on the progress for the Jazz Tent - \$18-20,000 overhead, bar management, volunteer jobs as supervisor, rovers, door-checkers, security, set-up, clean-up and tear-down. Volunteers should call 482-6371. Many fine prizes for winning musicians are coming in from merchants. Sandee French has handled the bookings and Linda Yon reports 19

competitors. Block merchants are encouraged to tune to WEMU all during the YHF event.

- **Balloons** were suggested to decorate the block as during the Frog Island Festival.

Insurance Task

Force: Mark Cotter reports good prospects for DTA's liquor liability coverage after ten years of service with no claims - the only insurance agent in the block to receive applause



from the policy-holders.

Bill French reported moving several dumpsters to the Frog Island parking lot. Fences and locks are being investigated.

Chamber of Commerce dues are paid.

Jerry Tillman reported the following slate for the September election of officers: President - Bill French, Vice President - Paul Feters, Secretary - Tom Dodd, Treasurer - Sally Richie.

Sally Richie presented facts for the installation of promotional banners for the light posts from the Cross Street Bridge to North River Street. They could cost up to \$680 per pole. 10 to 15 poles are anticipated. Fundraiser ideas, possible designs and total costs will be discussed at August's meeting.

Sally Richie will prepare a mini-grant application to the Michigan Neighborhood Builders Alliance for repairs and maintenance of the Caboose as a community meeting place. Volunteers are needed at once to repair the south porch, a cupola window and replace light bulbs.

Huron Signs estimates \$200 to repaint the 'pink caboose' on the Follett House 'Welcome' sign.

NIFTY chair, Jerry Meadows, will meet with rod and custom car owners during YHF to initiate regular swap meets in the district.

Best Yet Award to Jacob Guter and Mary Doll for being the first residents to hold DTA office.

The Golden Goose Award goes to Guter and Doll, also, for moving to Ferndale. Good luck in your new home!

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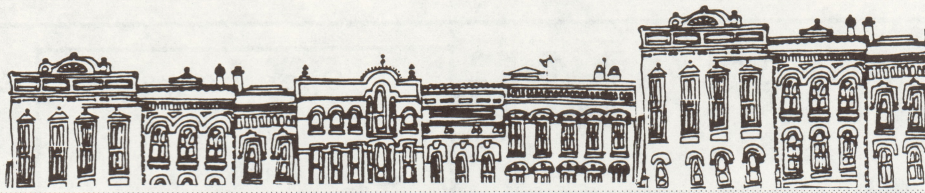
(property/business owners) = \$25

✓ **Associate membership**

(monthly mailings) = \$10

✓ **Patron membership** = \$100 for life.

c/o The Old Caboose, Down in Depot Town!



What's happening down in Depot Town?

This issue of *The Rag EXTRA* endeavors to answer the many questions asked during our biggest weekend of the year: Do the trains still run? Has the MCRR depot fallen down yet? What's for lunch? Who's playing next? What do you guys do the rest of the year? and What can I do to help?

A partial list of annual events in the district:

- Ypsilanti Heritage Festival
- Fall Fair at the Farmers' Market
- Children's Hallowe'en Party
- Festival of Lights
- Victorian Holiday
- Winter Jazz Events
- Frog Island Festival

Other, less formalized, events include (but not limited to) the following:

- Shopping for antiques
- Watching old buildings get fixed up
- Going to meetings in The Old Caboose
- Getting an ice cream cone or a beer
- Sitting around the pot-bellied stove on Saturday mornings at the Market
- Window shopping
- Flower smelling
- Private parties in The Old Caboose
- Greeting old friends
- Last year saw a Fashion Show which drew and involved people of all ages.
- Watching parades
- Riding, building floats, or marching in parades
- Waving at the trains
- Feeding the ducks
- Painting, scraping, weeding, washing, sweeping
- Tooting the horn on a pickup truck

- Watching people get haircuts
- Being glad we aren't a mall

Opportunities for folks who are tired of watching TV:

- 2nd Thursday meetings of the Depot Town Downtown Development Authority (DDA)
- 3rd Thursday meetings of the Depot Town Association
- 4th Thursday meetings of the Depot Town Antique Engine Club
- Serving on committees to make all the things in the first list happen
- Submit articles on 'local color' for the monthly Depot Town Rag
- Farmers' Market every Wednesday and Saturday all year 'round!

Things you shouldn't do down in Depot Town:

- Lean on antique cars
- Pass on the sidewalk without a greeting
- Trash the sidewalk
- Condominumize
- Paint it purple
- Put in a drop ceiling
- Install aluminum siding
- Write a research paper for a class you're taking
- Boomer Days (this isn't the Eighties, anymore!)

What you get for your investment in the district

Paying annual dues to a volunteer, non-profit organization can seem a terrible waste. Examine the following morbid possibilities and ponder the quality of life in this old railroad district:

✓ **\$25 Regular Membership:** You can vote on Association business, but you have to either own property or manage a business in the district. If you don't join, maybe somebody else will. Some of those old war horses have been hanging in there since 1976. They'll probably keep it up forever. District promotions keep on going, no matter what.

✓ **\$10 Associate Membership:** Anyone can do this. And DTA will send copies of the monthly *Depot Town Rag* to your home address. You don't even have to go down there between the river and the railroad tracks. You can just read about it in the paper. But they have your phone number and they'll pester you to do things.

✓ **\$100 Patron Membership:** What a deal! Send in a C-note and no one will ever bother you again. You will get *The Rag* in the mail every month and you can have an unlisted phone. If you pay more, they'll probably hang your photograph in The Old Caboose and burn candles in front of it.

✓ **\$1,000 Faithful Viewer:** This goes to the nearest public television station. Depot Town won't see any of it, but they have some great programs. Jazz, too. And a canvas book bag. But no *Rag* in it.

No Thanks!

There's been a lot of talk in The Old Caboose these past few months about the need for One More Volunteer Position. It seems there's no one in the organization with the assigned duty of writing 'thank you' notes to the faithful. Some of the glitzier non-profits around the area seem to have someone on board who grinds out the computerized kudos to just about everyone who's ever been on their mailing list. Sometimes those computerized notes arrive when you haven't been to the organization's events for two or three years. Are they just being sarcastic — or is the computer spitting out gratuities on its own? Maybe Depot Town needs a machine like that.

Sure, most of the faithful say they don't want 'thanks,' but there have been a lot of conversations lately that begin with the phrase, "Now, I'm not looking for any thanks for this, but . . ." and, when one hears this the third or fourth time, one eventually concludes that some "thank yous" are in order notwithstanding.

Is altruism dead? Would you serve on security at the jazz tent — even if it didn't guarantee you a free beer? — only free admission into an already free admission cultural event for any Joe Blow who walks down the street? If you didn't do the job, somebody else probably would, right? Probably.

Would you solicit opinions, suggestions, ads or information from your neighbors — even if you felt many of them were giving you the run-around and suspecting you were in on The Take, somehow? Or would you rather belong to an organization that has higher dues, exclusivity among its membership and a paid staff to do all those things? Some are pursuing that route for Depot Town. Others, dubious of its merit, say, "Times the test; old ways are best."

Even if such a move should take place, there would doubtless be a transition period among the old hands and the new hands when some of the old ethic would show through. Some of them would still be saying their "pleases" and "thank-yous" by habit. And the new folks might think them archaic and strange.

The annual search is on in Depot Town for nominees to serve as the Association's officers next year. Elections are at the September meeting, when the treasurer asks all in attendance to pay their dues for the coming year and to vote for the president, vice president, secretary and treasurer of their choice. Sometimes "thanks" are given. Interested parties are encouraged to participate. And the thanks are deeply personal. Sometimes you can even thank yourself.

When J.R. Trading Post's Jerry Tillman comes around to ask, *thank her for asking* — before giving your thoughtful reply. It's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it. Thanks, Jerry.



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